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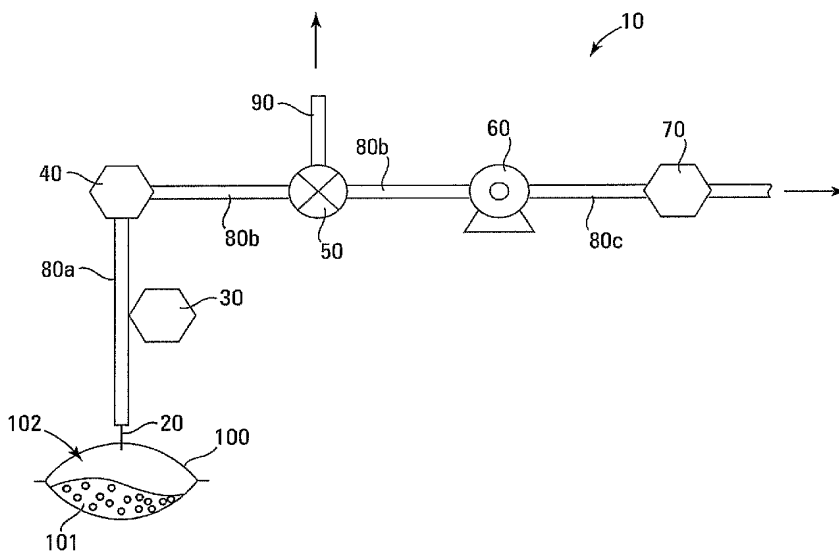
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(54) Title: INSTRUMENT AND METHOD FOR DETECTING LEAKS IN HERMETICALLY SEALED PACKAGING



(57) Abstract: An instrument for detecting leaks in a hermetically sealed package. The instrument includes (i) a hollow needle, (ii) a mass flow rate sensor in sealed fluid communication with the lumen defined by the hollow needle, and (iii) a vacuum pump. The vacuum pump is in fluid communication with the lumen defined by the needle for evacuating gas from the hermetically sealed package, and in fluid communication with the mass flow rate sensor for directing mass flow from the evacuated package into operable contact with the mass flow rate sensor so as to permit sensing of any continuing mass flow from the evacuated package. The instrument may further include an oxygen sensor in sealed fluid communication with the lumen defined by the hollow needle for analyzing the oxygen concentration of the gas within the hermetically sealed package.

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